Remarks as delivered by Adm. Mike Mullen
Current Strategy Forum
Naval War College
Newport, RI
14 June 2006

Good morning, it's really great to be back in Newport. There are lots of good friends, I was also encouraged in the few minutes I had out front this morning I met individuals from almost throughout the country, whether from it was New Hampshire, Arizona, Ohio, California, Missouri, Illinois, pretty spectacular representation.

And to me that speaks volumes about the opportunities that are here to elevate the discussion and to be able to talk to our country about what the United States Navy is and what it should be in the future, and the potential I think that is there in the compelling requirements with respect to the uncertain environment in which I think we are all going to be living in for the next several decades.

Jake, I'm very appreciative of that introduction.

Among friends here I saw Admiral Joe Strauser, Jim Hogg, Don Pilling. John Panneton from the Navy League is here, who also has so incredibly well represented them and us in key discussions throughout the country and the world, but also in particular in Washington where we got to have good friends to support what we do as a Navy. Also in the audience, obviously, key faculty and students here -- students not just from the United States military forces, but also students from foreign countries, which I think is a critical investment on the part of their countries as well as on the part of us, because it is forging these relationships literally at these levels that I think will have a long term impact on the future security and the relationships of navies and nations in the long run.

I always enjoy coming back to Newport. It really is a special city and I am really grateful that we have communities in our country like this one, great Navy towns that support our military, our Sailors, and their families as well as our military guests from foreign countries.

I appreciate the opportunity also to be here with you and to say a few words at this really critical forum.

These are an incredibly important two days for our Navy. They always are.

It seems that some of our best ideas are born right here at our Naval War College during this forum.

And if they aren't born here they certainly mature here.

It's another one of the things that makes Newport so special.

It's a place – an environment, really – that permits military officers time to think and read about the past and the future. Time to plan, time to write, and time to prepare themselves for higher responsibilities which will come very rapidly.

Jake, you've done a wonderful job at leading, managing and shaping that time for our future leaders.

Thank you for putting a real emphasis on jointness in Navy education – in Navy culture, for the truly remarkable job you have done with the Joint Forces Maritime Component Commander's Course and for broadening this institution's efforts to enhance global maritime cooperation.

From strengthening executive level education to innovative and dynamic war-gaming you are indeed, making a big difference.

What I've always liked best about Jake is the energy and enthusiasm he pours into every pursuit. I asked him recently to develop a new reading program for the Navy and you'd have thought I'd given him a brand new car. He grinned like a possum who just ate a sweet potato.

The man is tireless, bursting with ideas, and clearly in the right job.

So, Jake thanks and keep it up. Our Navy needs more of what you are doing.

One thing that all of you here in Newport have always done so well is study and advance the discussion of strategy.

And that's why I am here today. To talk about strategy, a maritime strategy to support the President's National Security Strategy and President's National Strategy for Maritime Security.

I think it's high time we wrote a new one, and I'd like to get started on it as soon as possible.

I see Jake is already taking notes. Folks, he may actually have that strategy drafted by the time I'm done up here.

I remember 25 years ago when then Secretary Lehman addressed this very forum and "Hailed the Return of Strategy."

In that speech, he outlined the beginnings of what became The Maritime Strategy of the 1980's.

It was a watershed speech because it outlined in public a new set of ideas that guided the Navy for some time, a cornerstone strategy that set the Navy's course on the long path to victory during those closing years of the Cold War.

It clearly defined the purpose of naval forces in that struggle … and articulated precisely how they would be used to deter and, if necessary, defeat the forces of the Soviet Union, first at sea and then ashore.

It was brilliant in its simplicity, all-encompassing in its scope.

It was a strategy for – and of – its time and it worked, prevailing across presidential administrations, Chiefs of Naval Operations and varying budget cycles.

When the dust settled around the feet of those who watched the Berlin Wall fall, this Navy had the Fleet and its Sailors organized, trained and equipped around a core set of unifying principles and missions.

We were ready, and we knew the task before us.

And while we remained "hotly" engaged across the globe to contain communism in what was called a Cold War, the fact that we never had to fire a shot in anger at Soviet fleets served as salient testament to the wisdom of the strategy itself. To preserve the peace but be able to win, if required.

The maritime strategy of the 80s endured and had relevance. It showed us the way in times that I think we often forget were just as uncertain as the times we live in right now.

The great difference, of course, is that today's uncertainty and today's threats are of an entirely unique sort caused and perpetuated by new challenges, challenges brought on, quite frankly, by the collapse of that wall and the unstoppable, unrelenting pace of globalization.

We therefore need a new Maritime Strategy for this era and for war, for our time and the incredible and growing challenges that we face.

Author Tom Friedman refers to globalization as the great flattener of the world, making it easier and freer for people, institutions and governments to converse and share and inter-relate.

You can't hear them, but the invisible walls of 20th century "containment" are crashing down around us every single day.

In my view, there are three principal effects of globalization driving the need for a new strategy:

The first effect is the undeniable expansion of interdependent world markets and economies on a truly global scale that binds nations, corporations and people.

We are all now connected. We trade with our enduring allies, just as we do with nations for whom our friendship is still burgeoning.

And since most governments derive their legitimacy from economic stability, and most of the world's commerce still travels by sea – some 90 percent – there remains a key role for navies and maritime security.

It is not by happenstance that our vision for the Navy includes the need to keep sea lanes open and free.

The second great effect of globalization is driving a "race for energy" that compounds and complicates the natural friction evident in market-based economies.

You don't have to look any further than the rising price of gas at the pump or the efforts by both governments and corporations to find alternative energy solutions to see that this is going on.

I don't mean to suggest here that a world war for oil looms on the horizon.

But we would be foolhardy not to factor into our planning the impact that energy competition and the future state of energy sources have – and will have – on our security.

Finally, globalization has promoted the rapid and unfettered spread of ideology. The internet and the free flow of instant communications engenders the easy and efficient proliferation of ideas, values and cultural norms that can – and sometimes do – promote conflict.

In the Middle Ages, it took months – even years – for an idea or a technology to travel to distant lands. As recent as only a couple of decades ago, it still took days and weeks for new thoughts to take root.

Today, I can send my opinions across the globe in seconds, and those opinions can start to shape actions that very day, that very hour.

It can be a good thing – not always welcomed by those I send email taskers to – but it is also a powerful force to reckon with in the hands of those who wish freedom ill.

And we must bear in mind that the seas are also commons available to those who spread destructive behavior and disruptive ideologies.

Globalization, with all its benefits, has empowered what some have called fourth generation enemies – terrorists, proliferators of W-M-D and other weapons, organized criminals, smugglers, drug traffickers and pirates.

Yes, pirates. Only today they sail the seas with satellite phones and laser-guided weapons instead of cutlasses and muskets.

Let me be clear: It's not that the world wasn't facing globalization during the Cold War, it was. It's just that before the end of that war and the rapid onset of the information age, we didn't have to deal with the incredible pace of globalization.

As Friedman himself put it:

"Companies … who failed to navigate the rapid changes brought about in their marketplace may be a warning to all the businesses, institutions and nation-states that are now facing these inevitable, even predictable, changes, but lack the leadership, flexibility and imagination to adapt – not because they are not smart or aware, but because the speed of change is just simply overwhelming them."

I want to be smart and I want to be aware as we enter this new century – we all do – and I think Friedman has it right.

I think adapting not just to change, but to the speed of change, is critical.

But let's be frank. The reason we do not have such a new Maritime Strategy already, is that the scope and the scale of threat – the issues involved – the complexity of this globalized era and this staggering pace of change seem almost impossible to plan for.

But plan for them we must.

If our new Maritime Strategy has any hope of enduring for as long as its predecessors did, it must be of – and for – its time, this new time of uncertainty and change.

As we stay patient and committed in Iraq and Afghanistan, as we continue to deploy around the world we must ponder:

How do we help win this Long war by all the things Naval Forces are doing right now and how do we prepare for whatever globalization will drive us to next?

We must redefine Sea Power for this new era and explain how we will operate differently, train differently, educate differently, and balance our forces differently.

It must help us win the big wars and the small ones. Two challenges, one Fleet.

So I am here to challenge you. First, to rid yourselves of the old notion – held by so many for so long – that maritime strategy exists solely to fight and win wars at sea, and the rest will take care of itself.

In a globalized, flat world the rest matters alot.

Then to ask ourselves and to help answer the really tough questions about what a new Maritime Strategy must do.

What must the elements be? What must it endeavor to encompass?

I contend that the elements start with a belief that we are a maritime nation blessed with three enduring naval strengths – one, to influence, two, to anticipate and flexibly respond, and three, to build friends and partners.

Influence. The title of Alfred Thayer Mahan's groundbreaking book is "The Influence of Sea Power Upon History."

In all the debates swirling about his ideas of big fleet warfare and battle engagements, we sometimes lose the greater premise of his thesis that what naval forces do can uniquely influence the history of nations and peoples.

And Mahan believed, as we all should, that there is no greater or more powerful influence than to spread the benefits of free markets and free societies.

Where the old Maritime Strategy focused on sea control, the new one must recognize that the economic tide of all nations rises – not when the seas are controlled by one – but rather when they are made safe and free for all.

Today, the globalization of the world economy is truly an engine of hope for our children for all people.

Globalization has driven down trends in hunger and poverty while sharply enhancing standards of living across the globe.

In just half a century, free markets and representative governments have spread from less than 20 percent to benefit more than 60 percent of the world's people.

These are the positive moral consequences of economic growth – growth largely dependent upon free trade and open sea lanes.

But while protecting 21st century trade routes is an absolutely necessary function of a naval force – it is far from sufficient.

Markets also require stability. So we need to think critically about how naval forces support the Joint, Inter-Agency, and International effort to intercede effectively when societies are torn asunder by the influence of radical ideologies and destructive behavior.

And there perhaps is no greater influence than the stability we can provide when disaster strikes.

How, then, can our strategy strengthen the way naval forces respond, and then smoothly transition from a military-led emergency response to a civilian-led restoration and recovery?

We saw this last year when the hospital ship Mercy gave hope and care to thousands victimized by the tsunami in Indonesia. Village leaders were singing the praises of what they called “the great white ship from America.”

Today, Mercy’s Sailors are at it again in the Philippines.

It is just one example of how naval forces can be enormously influential at changing hearts and minds – and how these are exactly the types of missions our new Maritime Strategy must include.

That speaks to the second enduring quality: flexibility.

Perhaps the greatest strength of naval forces is the inherent flexibility they provide policy makers. Like positive influence, flexibility can help bring certainty to an uncertain world.

Naval forces can modulate their footprint, their visibility, their responses to match the circumstances.

They ease tensions by providing actors – be they states or individuals – on and off ramps during every phase of conflict.

But how can naval forces, on one hand, hedge against and deter potential strategic competitors without provoking confrontation, while, on the other hand, position themselves with care to offer a path to deescalate a crisis?

We also need to ask how the Navy’s flexibility can help with the toughest of challenges.

How we can find and eliminate terrorists and other non-state actors intent on destroying our way of life?

How can the Navy help to cut the flow of weapons of mass destruction and other catastrophic technologies they desire?

Our strategy must answer these questions.

We are being forced to flex our capabilities and adapt to this new era. The Navy Strategic Plan and the Naval Operating Concept along with the National Fleet Policy will provide new opportunities that are interim, yet integral, to the new Strategy we must develop.

One idea we are considering is establishing Global Fleet Stations.

The idea is to forward deploy, where invited, a fleet of shallow draft ships and support vessels to areas where most of our allies are operating right now – in green and brown water.

Imagine the power of having a cadre of Foreign Area Officers that understand the language, build friendships – engender cooperation – and undermine the very conditions often exploited by those who wish to fracture the peace.

Imagine a hub where all manner of Joint, Inter-Agency, International Organizations, navies, coast guards and non-governmental organizations could partner together as a force for good.

That speaks to the last, but not the least, of our enduring naval strengths: partnerships.

In a globalized, interconnected world, nobody can go it alone.

Where the previous Maritime Strategy was designed to defeat a single enemy – and our new one must retain the ability of the Joint and coalitions forces to do just that – we must also unite all freedom-loving nations to defeat a diverse array of fourth generation threats.

Today, we are sailing with navies and working with agencies in different ways than we ever would have imagined just a few years ago.

You've heard me speak of the notion of a 1,000-ship navy. It is an idea that is gaining traction.

Everywhere I go, heads of navies I speak with are excited about the concept of bringing together a Fleet comprised of ships and capabilities from many law abiding nations, standing watch over the seas – standing watch with each other.

So, in closing, I challenge you to reflect seriously on these enduring qualities of influence, flexibility, and partner building – just as Mahan did over one hundred years ago.

He was perhaps the first to truly advance the discussion of Sea Power. This new Maritime Strategy will elevate it far above anything he could have envisioned in his day.

But as the late Dr. Phil Crowl used to teach and write when he was a Professor here … while much of Mahan's thinking is dated, the questions he asked are not.

Mahan constantly prodded his students to think about the moral consequences of naval force. To ponder the responsibilities – and the opportunities – of world power and to understand naval strengths and how Sea Power could truly influence history.

This was ever so clear when Mahan addressed his war college class of 1892.

“All the world knows,” he said, “that we are building a new Navy … well, when we get our new Navy, what are we going to do with it?”

While it is much … much tougher today – that remains the question our new Maritime Strategy must clearly answer.

And the sooner, the better.

And I will not rest easy – none of us should – until we have that Maritime Strategy signed, sealed and delivered to the Fleet.

Somebody grab Jake’s notebook down here, and let’s get started.

God Bless you, and the United States Navy and all who serve. Thank you for your time and participation.